A LETTER Touching A Colledge of Maids, OR, A VIRGIN-SOCIETY.

Written *Aug.* 12. 1675.

Noble Sir,

YOU may expect I should give you some account of the *Design* mention'd yesterday at our Venison (where we had half a dozen fair young Ladies, rich, and virtuous) concerning the *Colledge* of

A *Maids,*

Maids, or the *Virgin-Society*, at leaſt ſo far as to free it from ridicule. Thus then,

Firſt, The *End* (for that is firſt to be conſidered) is to improve ingenuous Maids in ſuch qualities as beſt become their Sex, and may fit them both for a happy Life in this, and much more in the next World.

Secondly, The *Means* is firſt to ſeparate them from the contagion of common Converſation (which is ſeldome uncorrupt) and to find them decent employments and exerciſes, both Divine and Humane (with moderate Recreation) in a convenient Houſe, where they may have Lodging and Diet together, and be under Government, ſomewhat like the Halls of Commoners at *Oxford*.

Thirdly, At entrance every one puts in *Caution-money* into the hands of the *Steward*, an Aged, grave Gentleman, and of known integrity; five pounds, more or leſs, according to the quality of the Perſons. For; Fourth-

Fourthly, There are two *Tables*, higher and lower *Commonſals*, and the chief *Governeſs* at the head of the higher, the *Pro-Governeſs* of the lower Table.

Fifthly, They are ſerved by *Maids* of meaner birth and eſtate, and ſome of theſe have thereby maintenance from their friends (not enough) and they wait at the higher Table, ſome other, and fewer, wait at the lower. And all theſe wait alſo on the Ladies in their Chambers, being well rewarded for their ſervice.

Sixthly, There belongs to this Houſe an antient *Divine*, of competent Gravity and Learning (approved by the Lord Biſhop of the Dioceſs) to attend at the Chappel or Dining-room, once or twice a day for Prayers; and He alſo Preacheth once or twice a Week.

Seventhly, The *Governeſſes*, (which may be choſen yearly by conſent) according to the Advice of the *Chaplain*, appoint the Ladies and their maids

a method of private Reading and Devotion.

Eighthly, The Fathers of the Virgins (or two choſen men amongſt them) are *Viſitors* of the Colledge, and may, when they pleaſe, take their Daughters home for a few dayes, and diſpoſe of them in marriage when they pleaſe, taking a fair Farewell of the Society.

Ninthly, A fair *Garden* belongs to the Houſe, where they have pleaſant Walks and Arbors, and variety, not only of beautiful Flowers, but of wholſome Herbs, and Phyſical Plants; whereof they learn the Uſe and Virtues.

Tenthly, Their *Library*, or cloſet of Books, in the Dining room, contains choice Authors of *Hiſtory*, *Poetry*, and eſpecially of *Practical Divinity* and *Devotion*: Not only *Engliſh*, but of Learned, as well as Modern *Language*. Wherein divers of the Society are skilled, and willing to teach the reſt,

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reſt, as many as are inclined and apt to learn.

Eleventhly, There are among themſelves alſo not wanting, who teach *Muſick* and *Dancing*, (beſides *Needle-works* and *Drawing*) ſo far at leaſt, (which is enough) as concerneth decent motion, and geſture of body, and may ſerve for recreation, or for the ſervice of God, I mean Muſick of Voice or Inſtrument.

Twelfthly, Some of them are capable and well-affected to ſtudies of *Philoſophy*, eſpecially Natural and Moral; and delighted with making ſome of the eaſier *Experiments* in Natural things.

Thirteenthly, Their *Chambers*, and liberty of going abroad, and viſiting of Friends, may be eaſily ordered by the Counſels of their Parents, whom we have named Viſitors or Overſeers, and by the Governeſſes.

Fourteenthly, Their *Apparel* is modeſt, ſuitable to their Minds. The upper Garment a looſe Gown girt about them,

them, and a large Hood; the Gentlewomen wear fine silk, of some sad colour; their Maids of fine Serge. But when with their Parents and Friends, they go in any becoming habit, not shewing any part naked, beside the face and hands.

Fifteenthly, On the *Holy dayes* they use to go orderly to the Parish-Church near their House, where they have a private Gallery fitted for them.

All this, (which you may add to, or alter) is submitted to your candid censure, by

Aug. 12. 75. Your Humble Servant

B. C.

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POSTSCRIPT.

Sir,

THe *Abby-House*, holden by Leaſe, will contain twenty Gentlewomen, and their ten Maids: two for the Kitchin, two for the Buttery, and ſix for the Dining Room. The *Perſons* may be found within ſeven miles compaſs, as I ſuppoſe.

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As for the *Religious Orders of Virgins* in the *Roman* Church, though ſome of thoſe very great abuſes have crept in; yet I think 'twere to be wiſh'd, that thoſe who ſuppreſt them in this Nation, had confin'd themſelves within the bounds of a *Reformation*, by chooſing rather to rectifie and regulate, than aboliſh them.

FINIS.